# THE NEW INDIAN EXPRESS

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A man wearing a mask walks through a crowded walkway in Kochi | A SANESH


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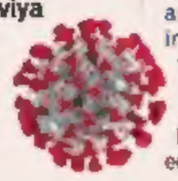
## NATIONWIDE COVID READINESS DRILL IN HOSPITALS TODAY

**Union Health Minister Mansukh Mandaviya will visit AIIMS, Jhajjar on Monday to oversee the drill, officials said**



**32,814**

**ACTIVE CASES AT SIX-MONTH HIGH**

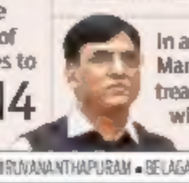
Both public and private hospitals from all districts are expected to take part in the two-day event, which will assess the availability of specially-designated hospital beds, stock of medicines, equipment and oxygen

The assessment comes as India recorded **5,400** fresh Covid cases on Sunday, which took the number of active cases to **32,814**

**CENTRE ASKS STATES TO DO MORE TESTING**

**23 states**

the average tests per million people were below the national average, a statement by the Union health ministry said



In a recent meeting with state health ministers, Mandaviya said the five-fold strategy of 'test-track-treat-vaccinate and adherence to Covid protocols' will continue to guide Covid management

**11 more deaths take toll to 5,30,965**

**Three** deaths were reported from Gujarat, **two** from Himachal Pradesh, **one** each from Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Maharashtra, Odisha, Uttar Pradesh, and Kerala

## Kerala tops the chart with 12K active cases

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ TPuram

WITH 1,750 to 1,900 fresh cases per day, Kerala is reporting the highest number of daily Covid infections in the country. Active Covid cases crossed the 12,000-mark in the state as of Sunday, prompting the health department to keep a close watch on hospital occupancy. Maharashtra and Delhi are the other states reporting a huge number of daily cases — around 500 per day.

Health officials said hospital occupancy in Kerala saw a rise in the last week. While most cases are mild, 1.2% of the patients required ICU beds and fewer than 1% required oxygen support, they said. Test positivity rate — the percentage of people testing positive for Covid — is over 10% in at least 10 districts. Ernakulam, Thiruvananthapuram and Kottayam are reporting the maximum cases.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EDUCATION EXPRESS

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ANNOUNCEMENT

***Edex*** is back in print, this time on the back page of the main book. It will appear every Monday starting today. Happy reading. - *Editor*


# India earns its stripes, tiger population at 3,167

### Central Indian Highlands, Eastern Ghats hosts highest population of 1,161 big cats

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ Mysuru

INDIA has emerged as a leader in the conservation of wild tigers, as the population of the big cat in the country has almost doubled since 2006 to cross the 3,000-mark. According to the tiger status data, revealed by PM Narendra Modi during the commemoration of 50 years of Project Tiger at the KSOU Convention Hall here on Sunday, the minimum population estimate of tigers in the country is 3,167, a rise of 1,756 big cats in just one-and-a-half decades.

The data revealed that 70 per cent of the tiger population of the world is in India, which has 53 tiger reserves. The fifth cycle of the All-India Tiger Estimation (2022) covered forested habitats in 20 states with a foot survey of over 6,41,449 km for carnivore signs and prey abundance estimation. Camera traps were placed at 32,588 locations, resulting in 4,70,81,881 photographs, of which 97,399 were of tigers. In all, 6,41,102 man-days were invested for the survey, which is the world's largest effort for any wildlife assessment till date.

The Nilgiris cluster, which stretches from Nagarahole to BRT Hills in the Western Ghats landscape, houses the largest tiger population in the world, and has contributed significantly to the colonisation of tigers in neighbouring areas, the data revealed. The region with habitat restoration and anti-poaching measures has helped stabilise the tiger population. Also, a significant reduction in tiger occupancy has been observed throughout the landscape and colonisation of tigers in the northern parts of the Western Ghats, indicating good connectivity across the landscape from Nilgiris Cluster to BRT, including Nagarhole, Wayanad and Bandipur.

The Central Indian Highlands and Eastern Ghats landscape has the highest population of 1,161 tigers, and it is the best tiger habitat in the country with conservation efforts from Odisha, Maharashtra and Madhya Pradesh in protecting the core areas.

CONTINUED ON: P5

**Experts ask why partial report released**

Experts and forest department officials have questioned why a partial all India Tiger Estimate report was released as the final report will be released in July. **PS**

Prime Minister Narendra Modi poses for a photo before a safari at Bandipur Tiger Reserve during commemoration of 50 years of Project Tiger | UDAYASHANKAR S

## Oscar stars seek houses for tribals at elephant camp

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ Mysuru

BELLIE, the star of the Oscar-winning documentary -- The Elephant Whisperers, requested PM Narendra Modi on Sunday to provide houses for all the adivasis living in Theppakadu Elephant Camp and to help with the education of tribal children in the region.

Modi visited the elephant camp in Mudumalai Tiger Reserve in Tamil Nadu after a safari at the Bandipur Tiger Reserve. He met Bomman and Belli, who have dedicated their life to caring for orphan elephants, and felicitated them for their noble service. The documentary film based on the couple won the Oscar award recently.

Talking to TNIE, Bellie said she is happy that Modi visited and felicitated them. "I requested Modi for houses for all the adivasis in the camp, good roads and education for all the children of adivasis. The Prime Minister asked me to visit the district collector's office and get help. Modi said he will direct the authorities to attend to our problems," she added.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi meets Belli and Bomman during his visit to Mudumalai Tiger Reserve on Sunday

She also said that Modi invited them to his residence in New Delhi.

Bomman said he was thrilled after Modi sat next to him and put his hand around his shoulder. "We also requested laptops for our children who are pursuing education. The PM assured us he would look into our demands," he said.

Bomman said the credit for their achievement should go to the elephant calf which brought them the Oscar award. "This is also a recognition for the forest department and Mudumalai Tiger Reserve," he said.

INSIDE K'TAKA COULD BE A TIGER STATE | P5

## GAIL reduces prices of piped gas, CNG by ₹7

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ Bengaluru

IN line with the Union government's guidelines to pass on new domestic gas pricing benefits to its customers, GAIL Gas Ltd is steering its pricing mechanism.

The company on Sunday announced a reduction in prices of its Domestic Piped Natural Gas (PNG) and Compressed Natural Gas (CNG) by Rs 7 per unit in Bengaluru Urban and Rural districts and Dakshina Kannada.

The prices came into effect from Sunday, and they stood at Rs 51.50 per standard cubic metre (SCM) for PNG and Rs 82.50 per kg for CNG.

"The new guidelines aim to establish a stable pricing regime for consumers. The usage of CNG and PNG as a preferred fuel will contribute to reducing the carbon footprint and improve the quality of life", said a press release.

EXPRESS READ

### 'India to be in top 3 atomic power producers by 2030'

New Delhi: India will achieve 20-gigawatt capacity of nuclear power generation by 2030 which will be a major milestone placing country as the third largest producer of atomic energy in the world after the USA and France, said Union Minister of State (Independent Charge) for Science &Technology Dr Jitendra Singh. Today, India is the sixth largest country in the world in the number of reactors, he said.

### Rinku slams 5 sixes, seals win for KKR

Ahmedabad: Kolkata Knight Riders' Rinku Singh slammed five consecutive sixes to pull off a sensational three-wicket win over Gujarat Titans in the Indian Premier League here on Sunday. Needing 29 runs off the last over, Rinku slammed left-arm pacer Yash Dayal for five sixes on the trot to register a last-ball win. **PTI**

## To beat anti-incumbency, BJP may resort to Gujarat model in state

ASHWINI M SRIPAD @ Bengaluru

BJP seems to be focusing on giving tickets to newcomers in many constituencies in the May 10 state Assembly elections. Following the Gujarat model, the party may drop at least 25 sitting MLAs, sources said. In Gujarat, ahead of the December 2022 elections, the party had denied tickets to around 40 sitting legislators.

What may be driving the BJP decision in Karnataka is the prediction by various surveys by political parties and non-political organisations that the state could face a fractured mandate. In a last-ditch effort, the party could be drawing up new strategies to cross the magic figure of 113 seats and form the government, and fielding new faces is one of them.

The party held the Central Election Committee meeting in New Delhi over Saturday and Sunday, and it was attended by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, party national president JP Nadda, Union Home Minister Amit Shah, former chief minister BS Yediyurappa, Chief Minister Basavaraj Bommai and Union Ministers Pralhad Joshi among others.

The party is likely to announce the list on Monday and already, candidates for 80-85 seats have been finalised, sources within the party said.

"BJP is considering giving tickets to young and new faces in some Assembly constituencies across the state. In Gujarat, the majority of the newcomers fielded in over 40 seats won. It was earlier thought that the Gujarat model may not work in Karnataka. But with various surveys indicating that the party might get less than 100 seats, experts and party seniors are suggesting changes in at least a few constituencies, where anti-incumbency prevails. This is an attempt to retain those seats," said a senior BJP leader, requesting anonymity.

Interestingly, party workers on the ground are excited about new faces being introduced to contest the polls. "We talk of BJP being a cadre-based party. Some of our MLAs, in spite of crossing 70 years and serving as ministers, still want to contest elections. We will be happy if tickets are given to party workers who are working on the ground," said a party worker, who wished not to be named.

Sources in BJP pointed out that when Modi became chief minister of Gujarat he was 50 years old, and when HD Deve Gowda became leader of opposition, he was 39 years old. "There is a need to groom youngsters," sources said.

## Pilot revives tussle with Gehlot ahead of Raj polls

RAJESH ASNANI @ Jaipur

WITH Rajasthan elections just a few months away, Congress leader Sachin Pilot on Sunday launched a frontal attack against Rajasthan Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot, accusing him of not pursuing any of the corruption cases against the previous BJP government led by Vasundhara Raje.

In a press conference in Jaipur, Pilot claimed when the Congress was in the opposition, Gehlot had claimed there were scams worth ₹45,000 crore. But, in four years of Congress rule no action had been taken against anyone involved in these scams, he alleged. Pilot also alleged that he had written two letters to the CM but nothing happened, indicating a 'collusion between Raje and Gehlot'. To put pressure on the Gehlot government, Pilot will sit on a one-day fast in Jaipur on April 11.

"Action needs to be taken quickly to prove that there was no collusion, so that Congress workers would feel that there was no difference between the words and actions of their government and leaders. Action should be taken against the allegations of corruption and scams made while in opposition," pilot said.

Sachin Pilot

Ashok Gehlot

This is not the first time that Pilot has taken a critical stance against the Gehlot-led government. In a rally last month, he raised the issue of paper leaks, stating that accountability must be fixed as such incidents have become common.

Additionally, Pilot mentioned that if everyone is given respect, the Congress can win the the 2023 Rajasthan elections.

## Kajal Hindustani arrested over her Guj hate-speech

DILIP SINGH KSHATRIYA @ Ahmedabad

RIGHT-WING activist Kajal Hindustani, who was booked over a hate speech she allegedly delivered on Ram Navami, which triggered a communal clash in Gujarat's Una town on April 1, was arrested on Sunday after she surrendered before the police.

As part of the Ram Navami celebrations, a public assembly was organised at Tower Chowk in Una where Kajal spoke. According to the police, communal tensions increased soon after her speech.

The police then set up a meeting of the leaders of the two communities on April 1 in order to defuse the situation.

The meeting, however, took a nasty turn with the leaders confronting each other. Subsequently, mob violence broke out in the town.

A complaint had been filed against her at the Una police station on April 2.

## Congress-NCP rift widens over Pawar's comments on Adani group, JPC probe

SUDHIR SURYAWANSHI @ Mumbai

THE Congress on Sunday launched a broadside against NCP supremo Sharad Pawar for defending industrialist Gautam Adani and criticising the Opposition's demand for a JPC probe into allegations against the Adani group.

Sharing the picture of Sharad Pawar and Gautam Adani, Congress spokesperson Alka Lamba tweeted in Hindi: "Scared, greedy people are dancing to the tune of authoritarian government for their own personal benefit. The one and only Rahul Gandhi has been fighting for the people. He is also fighting the capitalists and the corrupt people who are protecting them."

In response, NCP youth wing president Suraj Chavan shared the picture of Adani with Rahul Gandhi's brother-in-law Robert Vadra and Rajasthan CM Ashok Gehlot, asking if they were also 'greedy'.

Meanwhile, senior Congress leaders said they have noted the NCP chief's flip-flop and decided to go ahead with their protests against Modi and Adani. "We have decided to prepare the ground for the upcoming elections. We can't fully trust the NCP given their track record. We are ready to go solo or with an alliance," said a leader.

Notably, the BJP jumped to defend Pawar with Maharashtra deputy chief minister Devendra Fadnavis terming Alka Lamba's tweet and personal remarks against the veteran politician 'appalling'.

FULFILLING FATHER'S WISH

## *Muslims donate land for temple in riot-hit Bihar*

RAMASHANKAR @ Patna

WITH the wounds of a recent communal flare-up in Bihar's Biharsharif and Sasaram towns still to heal, two Muslim brothers in the state's Kishanganj district have set an example by deciding to ignore the atmosphere of distrust and proceed with fulfilling their father's wish of donating land for the construction of a Hanuman temple.

The land, worth several lakhs of rupees, in Ruidhasa locality in Kishanganj was handed over on the day of Hanuman Jayanti on April 6.

The foundation stone was laid the next day in a ceremony attended by the two brothers – Faiz Ahmad and Fazal Ahmad.

Faiz Ahmed said his father Zulqarnain Ahmad had promised the Hindu families living in their neighborhood to donate land for the construction of a temple. He said his father had told him and his brother about it before he died of Covid-19 in 2020.

"Some Hindus approached us and told us that if we wanted, we can donate the land for the construction of a temple. We decided to donate the land to keep our father's promise," he added. Quoting from the Bhagavad Gita, Faiz said, "You did not bring anything when you were born. Whatever you have, you have received from Him. Whatever you will give, you will give to Him. You came empty handed and you will go the same way."

Two brothers with Hindu leaders after handing over their land

"Whatever is yours today was somebody else's yesterday and will be somebody else's tomorrow," he added.

He said, "We should respect all religions and should live peacefully and should have respect for each other."